

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 00442

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ILO AORG PFOR

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE VENEZUELAN CANDIDATE FOR DIRECTORSHIP OF ILO

REF: CARACAS 418

1. AT REQUEST OF FONMIN CALVANI, I CALLED YESTERDAY ON PEREZ CHIRIBOGA, DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WITH CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT PEREZ SAID MINISTRY WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A SOUNDING ON WHETHER OR NOT CANDIDACY OF MARTINI URDANETA MIGHT IN OUR OPINION HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS. I TOLD HIM OF APPROACH MADE TO ME THAT SAME MORNING BY HEAD OF FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK, UNDOUBTEDLY BECAUSE RHODES IS ALSO THE NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, AND APPARENTLY MARTINI URDANETA THOUGHT HE COULD INFLUENCE MY FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION BY USING THAT CHANNEL.

2. PEREZ CHIRIBOGA SAID THAT CALVANI WAS MOST RELUCTANT OFFICIALLY TO SPONSOR THE CANDIDACY OF A PRESENT MINISTER IN THE OUTGOING CALDERA CABINET IF THERE WERE NO CHANCE OF SUCCESS. HAVING IN MIND THE RATHER BITTER REPERCUSSIONS WHEN U.S. FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SUPPORT THE VENEZUELAN
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CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

BANK, I ASKED PEREZ IF THERE WOULD BE ANY SIMILAR REPERCUSSIONS IF WE DID NOT FIND OUR WAY CLEAR TO SUPPORT MARTINI URDANETA. TO THIS, PEREZ CHIRIBOGA MADE A HASTY DENIAL, SAYING THAT ALL CALVANI WANTED TO FIND OUT WAS OUR FRIENDLY OPINION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT A CANDIDACY BY THE VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF LABOR COULD IN FACT GET OFF THE GROUND.

3. I ASKED IF MARTINI URDANETA SPOKE ANY LANGUAGE THAN SPANISH; PEREZ REPLIED NEGATIVELY. I POINTED OUT THAT FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IT SEEMED DUBIOUS INDEED THAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WOULD CHOOSE A DIRECTOR OF ILO WHO COULD SPEAK NEITHER ENGLISH NOR FRENCH. TO THIS PEREZ CHIRIBOGA AGREED.

4. COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION: IT IS PROBABLE THAT AFTER YESTERDAY MORNING'S CONVERSATION WITH RHODES, MARTINI URDANETA INFORMED CALVANI OF MY REACTION AS SET OUT PARA THREE REFTTEL. THIS RESULTED IN CALVANI'S GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS AT LEAST OF APPROACHING THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR BUT WITHOUT AN OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR SUPPORT OF MARTINI URDANETA AS AN OFFICIAL CANDIDATE.

5. FROM WHAT WE KNOW OF MARTINI URDANETA, HE IS A WELL REGARDED LABOR LAWYER WHO AT ONE TIME HANDLED LABOR RELATIONS FOR A LARGE LOCAL PAINT COMPANY. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF HIS INABILITY TO SPEAK ANY LANGUAGE BUT SPANISH AND HIS PRACTICALLY NONEXISTENT EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, I SHOULD SAY HE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE A GOOD DIRECTOR OF ILO. IN CONSEQUENCE, I RECOMMEND THAT DEPARTMENT PROMPTLY INDICATE THAT IT IS NOT ABLE TO SUPPORT SUCH A CANDIDACY OR PERHAPS MORE POLITELY INDICATE THAT IT HAS ALREADY DECIDED TO SUPPORT ANOTHER CANDIDATE FOR THE ILO DIRECTORSHIP. THE SOONER WE GET THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE IN THIS CASE, WHICH SEEMS LARGELY SELFPROPELLED BY THE MINISTER OF LABOR HIMSELF, THE BETTER IT WILL BE.

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